



Ad Val Advisor

*The Newsletter
for Wyoming
Property Tax
Appraisers*

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♦ New CAMA – Starting Over

♦ Special Districts Update ♦ In the Spotlight: Sarah Sitterle
♦ CLT Fixes

Ad Valorem Tax Division Newsletter

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From the Administrator

To say the least, the last weeks of 2003 and these first weeks of

2004 have been

tumultuous here at

the Ad Valorem

Division. The Depa-

rtment's termination

of the Terrascan

CAMA contract was painful, but

necessary. We are already underway

in the process of selecting a new

replacement CAMA system for the

State of Wyoming.

Two valued employees left

the Division in the past few weeks.

Sarah Sitterle resigned in December,

and Bob Williams retired in January.

We wish them the best in their future

endeavors. We are aggressively

reviewing our staff deployment and

organization to determine ways to

serve our constituents, customers, and

stakeholders better.

The State Legislature is now in session; there were at least 10 bills introduced that have been identified by the Ad Valorem Division as having potential significance to the property tax system.

DOR staff and our contracted programmer, Clyde Barker, have been busy reviewing and "shoring up" our existing CAMA systems. Ad Valorem staff is working diligently with the Special Districts to assure that needed information is provided for our files as required under 2003 legislation. Locally-assessed section staff has also updated commercial and residential cost tables in the CAMA system for 2004. The State-assessed section is working hard on 2004 state-assessed values. All of this just the usual stuff—and maybe a little bit more. Many of these items will be discussed elsewhere in this and certainly in forthcoming issues of the Ad Val Advisor.

For my part, let me say that the Ad Valorem staff is committed to continue working on the many special and unique projects currently underway, along with our regular ongoing duties and responsibilities. To be sure, the next few months will be challenging. Decisions made in these upcoming months may very well affect the property tax system in Wyoming for many years. It's an exciting time to be in this business.

One issue that I would like to comment upon separately is the issue of assessment education. Almost immediately after my appointment, I received comments from assessors that educational opportunities for assessment personnel needed

improvement. I agreed. To that end, I and my staff have begun a review of the classes that have been previously offered by the Division and/or approved for credit. We are also studying what additional educational opportunities the Division may be able to offer. The first result of that effort was the Marshall & Swift class that many of you attended last fall. An agricultural land and rural structures valuation class is in the works and we hope to offer it towards fall of this year. Unfortunately, our review of many other non-Division-provided classes that have been approved for credit in the past indicates that such approvals were often haphazard and inconsistent. It is my firm belief that classes approved for initial appraisal certification should be directly related to appraisal. Classes taken to meet continuing education requirements also need to be directly relevant to appraisal or assessment administration functions.

As we complete our review of our education "system" at Ad Valorem, we will be communicating to the Education Committee (and to all of you) our conclusions and proposals for change.

The goal is to assure that the appraisal and assessment credentials you receive from the Ad Valorem Division reflect your attainment of appraisal and assessment knowledge through relevant education.

Wade W. Hall
Administrator
Ad Valorem Tax Division



The staff at the Ad Valorem Tax Division would like to express our apologies for the delay of the latest release of the Ad Val Advisor newsletter. With the events of the past two months, the staff has been inundated with details to shut down the old CAMA contract and to re-start the process. Overall, the past six months were filled with their fair share of disappointment, but I think I can safely say that we are all looking forward to the future and the choices that lie ahead.

Several important things have been occurring over the past few weeks. Probably the most important detail has been the CAMA Selection Committee's decision to move forward with the bid process with the next three vendor candidates. Cole Layer Trumble (CLT), Eagle Computer Systems (ECS) and Colorado Customware Incorporated (CCI) are all back in the running for the new CAMA system. The good news is that all three vendors appear to be very excited about doing business in Wyoming.

Although we have been delayed by circumstances outside of our control, the Division and the beta counties have learned some important lessons we can apply this go around. The following is a short list of a few of these items:

► **Solid Contract Development.**

This is actually an area where the Division protected the State's financial interests. A solidly developed contract prevented a "financial hemorrhage" that would have needlessly drained the CAMA project budget. By monitoring and controlling exactly how budget dollars are spent, the Division was able to minimize our financial exposure at any given time.

This process helped reemphasize that a contract is a great tool to use to measure success and failure. This



holds true for both the State and the vendor. With clearly described goals and objectives, both parties are much more likely to focus on a common vision for the project. While a contract cannot always guarantee perfect results, it does help remove some of the ambiguity associated with a project of this size.

► **Preliminary Software Review.**

The Division is advocating that each vendor provide a copy of their software for our review. Each of us clearly understands that Wyoming has needs that will require unique modifications to the software. However, an onsite preliminary review of the software will ensure that many of our concerns and questions are answered right up front. We believe this review is important not only for the Division staff, but the Selection Committee and remaining County Assessors as well.

► **Ad Valorem Beta County #1.**

The Division is planning to be the first beta-county during the conversion. Granted, the Division is not a County Assessor's office, nor is it trying to be. But there are many issues regarding data conversion, statewide uniformity, system functionality and system security where the Division's insight will prove most beneficial. By dealing with these types of issues up front, each subsequent County conversion can deal directly with the issues facing that particular jurisdiction.

► **Communication.** It is of paramount importance that the County, the vendor and the Ad Valorem Tax Division keep the lines of communication open and working. Identifying issues and resolving those issues requires people to talk. This includes not only the County Assessor, Division Administrator and the vendor, but members of their staff as well. At the root of the communication process, coordination is essential. My role as the project coordinator is to help put the right people together, ensure that project information keeps flowing and to keep

our efforts moving in the same direction.

The Department has adopted an aggressive project schedule in order to get the next vendor selected and a contract negotiated and signed by late spring/early summer. We look forward to working with everyone in the months ahead!

David Chapman
Local Assessed Manager
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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Special District Update

With the departure of Sarah Sitterle, Bob Eicher is the lead contact for the Special District program. He has a great deal of history with the program, and is more than able to assist Counties and Special Districts with any questions. In addition, Bob played a key role in the Special Districts inventory process that took place this year, and is very familiar with County and Special District compliance issues.

The December compliance letter from the Division created quite a stir. We have received numerous calls from the Counties and Special Districts. In addition to the bevy of telephone calls, we have also received a stack of new mail from taxing entities working toward compliance. We will be working this new information in earnest once our 2004 Tax District Booklet and Maps are published and distributed.

One note on the legislative front, House Bill # 0212 – Political Subdivisions- Reporting of Boundaries, was not considered for an introduction vote to the Legislature, effectively killing the bill.

As with all the County Assessors, we will continue our efforts to assist as many entities as possible into compliance before the 2005 deadline.

David Chapman
Local Assessed Manager
Ad Valorem Tax Division

Activity on the CLT System

As many of the county Assessors know, in February the Ad Valorem Division flew Clyde Barker up from Ft Worth, Texas. The purpose of his visit was to spend two weeks with me and go through the CLT mainframe system.



With the unfortunate loss of our CLT Programmer, Jack Kobobel and the retirement of Susann Anderson, a void occurred in the maintenance of the CLT system. Based on my experience with the WYS CAMA system, David Chapman directed me to take over the task of maintaining the day-to-day operation of CLT system as well.

To accomplish this task, we decided to expand Clyde Barker's contract to include the maintenance of the CLT programs. Fortunately for us, Clyde was more than willing to take on this task.

With Clyde's help, we began researching any problems that were occurring with the CLT system. After many attempts to solve several "ABEND" occurrences over the phone, I requested to have Clyde come to Wyoming and work with me on the system one-on-one. This way Clyde had immediate access to the Ad Valorem staff, mainframe personnel, and CLT Assessors.

It was decided that we needed to maximize the best use of Clyde's time while he was here. Subsequently, we decided to concentrate on areas that negatively affect the day-to-day operations of the CLT system.

To help identify issues, I requested the CLT Assessors to e-mail us their areas of concern. We appreciate the feedback we got.

The first couple of days were dedicated to getting Clyde the necessary security and access to the

CLT system. Then the fun began by viewing and testing different areas of the system. Together we identified key areas of the system that needed our immediate attention and we spent the rest of the week working on these problems. The areas of concern included:

- Counties' ability to load their own CALP tables.
- The system ABEND message on screen 6 of the Primary Menu.
- Lack of a test system for CLT.
- The ABEND message on screen 6 of the Personal Property System.
- Daily and weekly backups for the CLT system.
- Ability to take exemptions off properties on screen 4 of the AA system.
- The parcel number not following the user from AA to CAMA and vice versa.
- The ability for multiple users to access and run MRA at the same time.
- The ability to toggle from AA to CAMA and back.
- The ability to e-mail selectabilities to a user's computer rather than print them on the line printer.
- Visiting Assessors and testing the changes in the system from the county side.

We are happy to report that the vast majority of the issues identified were solved. The e-mail issue is being addressed now and we expect closure on this issue within a week or so.

We would like to thank Debbi Surratt for allowing us to spend some time in her office and for the use of her computers. A "Thank You" also goes out to Dixie Huxtable and Lynn Allar for taking the time to work through our MRA system questions. Our eyes were definitely opened to

all the different steps to the MRA process and its outcomes.

It was a very productive two weeks and time well spent. Ad Valorem is very excited to have Clyde working on the programming issues for both CLT and WYS systems.

In the big scope of things these corrections or changes to the CLT system aren't earth shattering. However, they do make the day to day work easier to deal with. If you encounter any other system problems or suggestions with either the CLT or WYS systems, please don't hesitate to call or e-mail me.

Jack Rehm
Principal Appraiser
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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Employee Spotlight

This month's Employee Spotlight features Sarah Sitterle, a former GIS Specialist in the Local Assessments Section. This introduction is



bitter sweet as we had to wish Sarah a fond farewell last December. After nearly three years, Sarah resigned her position with the Department to pursue other opportunities. This was a shock to all of us at Ad Valorem, and we will miss her immensely. However, due to her sudden departure from Revenue, she automatically became our next candidate for the Employee Spotlight!

Sarah came on board with the Department of Revenue on February 1st, 2001. She worked in the GIS section of Ad Valorem, and was our lead staff member in tax district management. Prior to accepting her position with Ad Valorem, Sarah worked at the State Engineers Office as a Database Technician, and spent

ten months in the Planning Department of the Wyoming Department of Transportation.

Sarah was born in Toledo, Ohio, and grew up in both Toledo and Waterville, Ohio. She entered Bowling Green State University in 1993, and graduated in 1997. Sarah continued her education by enrolling with the University of Wyoming graduate school to pursue a Masters degree from the College of Arts & Sciences, Department of Geography & Recreation. While there, Sarah received a research grant and worked on a joint University of Wyoming and National Park Service project that was focused on Site Planning. She recently completed her degree and received her Masters of Planning in December 2003.

In regards to her personal life, Sarah told us that she has been married to her husband Bill for almost five years, and that they have a dog named Lucy who gives them plenty of company. Sarah also mentioned that she has two sisters, two brothers, six nieces, and five nephews to keep track of. In her spare time, Sarah enjoys cooking, reading, crocheting, quilting, and canoeing.

Favorite Movie(s): What about Bob?
Charade

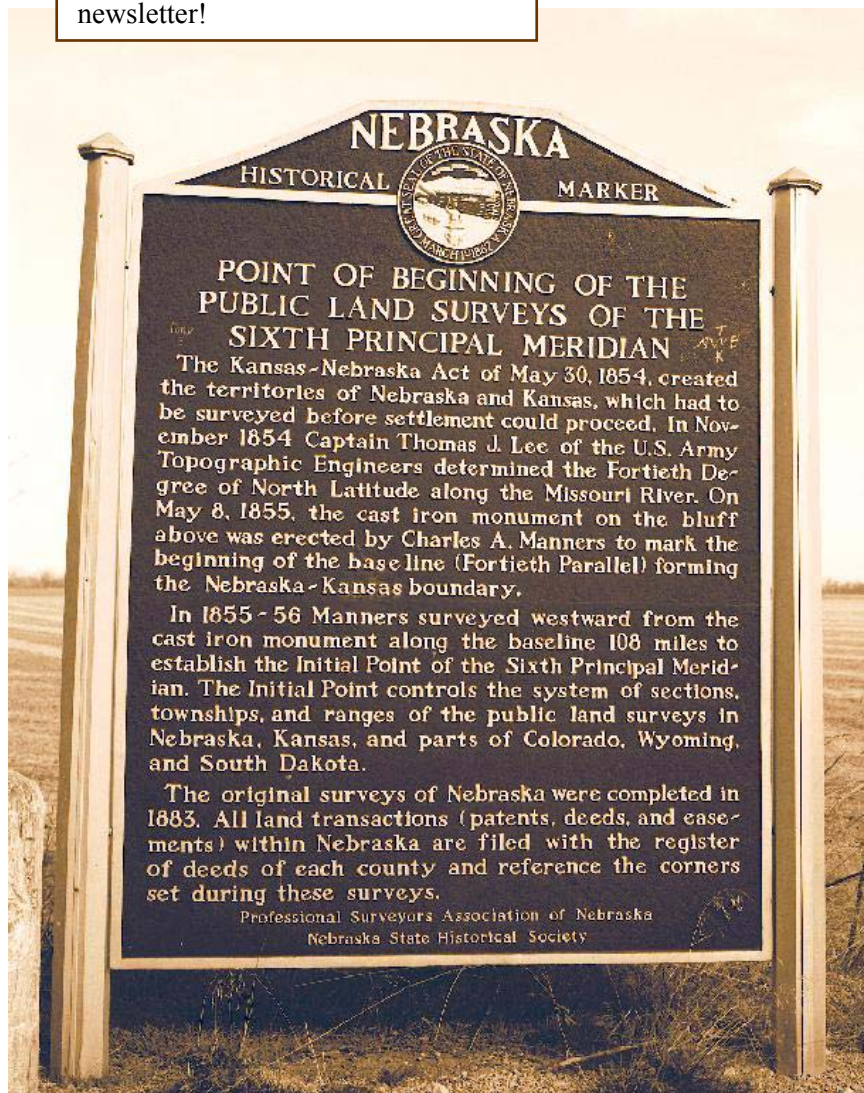
Favorite Food(s): Anything Italian
Peas (yes, peas)

As a side note, Ad Valorem would like to thank Sarah for her significant contribution to the Division, and for all her work for this newsletter.

Geir Solvang
Principal Appraiser
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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Here is a photo that was taken by Jim Painter during his travels. Thanks, Jim, for an interesting, and geographic addition to the newsletter!



Upcoming Ad Valorem Sponsored Education

7/19/04 – 7/23/04

IAAO Course 300
Fundamentals of Mass Appraisal,
Lander, WY

8/16/04 – 8/20/04

IAAO Course 500
Assessment of Personal Property,
Casper, WY

9/21/04 – 9/22/04

IAAO Course 354
Multiple Regression Analysis for Real Property Valuation,
Casper, WY

To register for classes, please contact
Jack Rehm at (307) 777-5313, or email: jrehm@state.wy.us